

Today I join the nation in celebrating National Freedom Day, in which we recall the pivotal moments in our nation's history when laws were established to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities for all Americans.

Freedom Day was first proclaimed by President Harry Truman and acknowledges the signing of the 13th Amendment by President Abraham Lincoln in 1865, which outlawed slavery in the United States. Inspired by former slave and military officer Major Richard Robert Right Sr., who believed that Americans should set aside a day to celebrate freedom, this day recognizes the struggles that so many have overcome in the fight for freedom and equality.

National Freedom Day also provides us with an opportunity to raise awareness of those around the world still striving for the freedoms we enjoy here in the United States. Today, the world is watching as Egyptian citizens are attempting to achieve these freedoms: liberty, speech, expression, representation, and opportunity. As the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative for Mediterranean Affairs, it is my sincere hope that the Egyptian government recall the principles of free peaceful assembly and political pluralism at the core of the Helsinki Process.

As an attorney, former federal judge, and now Member of Congress, I have always advocated on behalf of civil and human rights at home and abroad. These rights are essential to freedom, and freedom is essential to peace. Though National Freedom Day is about the celebration of our freedoms here at home, we must seize this opportunity to support our brothers and sisters around the world who yearn for the same rights and dreams to help build societies based on justice and equality.